

**Center for Modern Greek Studies
Greek American Oral History Project
Transcription**

Tape:

**Subject: Peter Hadreas
Interviewer: Julie Armin
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**Transcriber: Amanda Cookson
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**I: Interviewer
P: Peter**

Counter: 000

I: Ok this is Julie Armin and I am speaking with Peter Hadreas on May 26th of 2003. And umm let's start off with your parents' background. Umm, when and where was your mother born?

P: My mother was born in, on November 18th, 1919 and she born in Ethio, Greece {004} which is on the tip of the Peloponnese. Umm//

I: //Can you spell her name in Greek?

P: Sure and, and it's G-Y-T-H-I-O-N.

I: Ok. Sorry, go ahead.

P: Sure, umm, and she was the middle child of seven, both, she had three older brothers and three younger brothers. Umm, they left for Greece when she was a small child actually, four years old. And the reasons why they left had to do with trying to keep their family together. Umm the second oldest son, his name was Demitrios, umm had been here umm. In fact umm an older brother of my mother's father had been running the Greek newspaper here when she started around 1907, he was early to come here <speaking quietly>. It was called the Californ-, the California, "The California." And he was jobless and he had asked his brother, his younger brother, "Could you possibly, could I just take care for a while of your, one you have so many children and we have such a wonderful life here." They often times, people who had moved here had immigrated umm in their first generation often times portrayed life here in San Francisco far better than it was and made themselves out to be far more wealthy than they were.

And so he had, he was doing {020} one son was shipped uhh to San Francisco but apparently had a time, had a terrible time of it and he used to write letters back to his parents, these are my grandparents now, according to my mother when tear-stained letters uhh can be from whatever eight, nine-year-old saying he just hated it. Umm then that result was that as I understand it was a large motivation for their moving here. So they actually and this is not perhaps too happy a story of immigrants, at least those two people, that is my mother's mother and father, my maternal grandparents, really longed for Greece and they didn't particularly like being here for the rest of their lives <laughing>.

I: <laughing>

P: They did the best as they could. But they weren't happy here. So any case in this voyage umm they took the rest of their children which were six and my mother who was about four as I say and they went through Ellis Island, the rest of it, and they came to where their older uncle was who was kinda taken, a little more powerful person in the family. And umm they, you know, tried to settle themselves here in San Francisco. So that's accounts for my mother, so she was here from a pretty early age in San Francisco and grew up in San Francisco and was part of the Greek community here.

I: Was she educated, obviously, she had her education in San Francisco?

P: Yeah.

I: Where was she educated?

P: She went to Horace Mann uhh Middle School, well I guess they call it junior high school now and then Mission High School which is you can see through the window here. Umm and we were a very close community. I mean her friends were almost, well let's see certainly more than half of them, they were Greek, they tended to stay together. Her parents pretty much, her mother spoke Greek pretty much to the end of her life, a little English. Her father worked in the newspaper that his brother had, did kind of the social columns. So he became much more social and much more Americanized. Umm but they were very much part of the transplanted Greek community.

I: Now your father grew up in Minneapolis.

P: Yeah.

I: So that//

P: In the case of his family umm, I wondered why S-, why they picked part, certain town because, you know, Greeks were all over the U.S. and sometimes I think it's connected to just names. I mean, there, there are Greeks who went to places like Sparta because it just happened to {044}. And that's what, my, my father's family in this case, he had also umm seven brothers and sisters. Umm they were all born in the U.S. but their parents had come here umm before, you know, not before their first child was born, so

they were again in a similar kind of *very* Greek community. But in this case uhh was in Minneapolis. Umm he was born in the U.S. Umm but again they spoke only Greek at home umm and they went through a usual pattern of trying to work their way up from usually very kind of simple jobs, in this case father managed to work his way into building a grocery store umm and then they would take it from there. The next generation would build upon that and by two generations they would do quite well but it really hadn't stopped and start very small, you know. I think that's a kinda typical immigrant story. But sometimes it involved shoe shine stands and you know selling your fruit carts.

I: Now uhh what part of Greece were your grandparents from?

P: Well they, they, my mother's family was from, it's part of Greece, the province is called Laconia and it is in the southern part of the Peloponnese. That's my mother's uhh and in fact the specific town is {058}, it's a nice uhh seaport town. Turns out my father was from the same place. This was something that they kinda marveled at umm that it turned out that life, if they had stayed in Greece they probably would have met each other, they both having stayed in Greece they probably would have run across, now whether they were married or not, who knows? But they likely would have encountered each other because these were small, horias, they're called, little villages. And, you know, you can end up <mumbling> {063} umm but it turned out that they married. Umm you know from very different parts. He was living in San Diego but yeah, make it a little more. <laughing> How would they meet? The same man who founded this newspaper, the California, also did math {067} and <chuckling> he uhh would, what he would do is that he would umm as he would go about California because one of his, his jobs involved reporting on news in Greece was to talk about social life. He wanted to know what was going on in various families and this included knowing who was single. And this was also a way in which he could, you know, develop a business which he actually did quite well at. Umm so if there were single, young ladies around he'd want to know about if there's single young men around he'd want to know about them. So as he was in San Diego, there was a single, young man around, in fact, that was my father. And then it turned out that his niece, umm was also single. Now he would never think to arrange this but my dad had an odd, a fashion, umm he was a {075} billion. He was a rather successful sort of acrobatic dancer, it's kind of odd thing to do and certainly not very Greek as far as I can tell. But he had pictures, publicity pictures and so again, the uncle ran the California newspaper had these pictures, the publicity {078}. My mother saw the pictures and she thought well, he looks pretty good and she wanted to meet him. And she certainly didn't want her uncle to handle it because that'll, was filled with this kind of "Greeksism" which at some point I'll have to tell you about which is the part of {081} second generations, generation Greeks and probably first generation Greeks don't like. She certainly didn't wanna go near a matchmaker or any of that or dowries and all those things that were connected with it. But she just wanted to meet him <laughing>. And she did, umm she told her uncle, "Look, I wanna meet that man, take it out of your, your file." <laughing> cuz {084} //

I: //Wow//

P: //something did. And uhh they {084}

I: And that's where you were born//

P: //Yeah//

I: //In San Diego//

P: //Yeah, I was born in San Diego and my older brother, I had one older brother, yeah.

I: Was there a Greek community there?

P: Yes, there was. And again they were much, very much a part of that. And of course the two of 'em had both these close-knit families, both large and both that actually would have known each other in Greece and could make connections back, so it turned out that this aunt actually knew my grandmother or knew them. They would be in this country but they would talk about people that they knew as children in their villages, even. It, it's rather umm, you know, small world <laughing>. Course this made these families particularly cross and it probably had an effect on me, umm, making Greek issues very concentrated. Umm there was no way I could escape from it if I wanted to and I didn't particularly want to. But with this kind of intensity and all these stories about the kind of, you know, kinsmen associated with their {095} sort of intense Greek background. Umm, yeah, they were very much a part of the usual things, which in Greek community means the church. Umm sometimes certain organizations, which they both have been part of, they're just kind of social, somewhat philanthropic organizations and umm. {100}//

I: //Yeah//

P: //these rather tightly knit families.

I: Can you talk a little bit about how the church has kind of shaped your Greek identity?

P: Well, yeah, I can. I mean I, I uhh, my job is, is I teach Philosophy at San Jose State and it's rather politically correct to not have uhh religious affiliations or at least to umm, Christianity seems to be on the outs, as far as I can tell in, in modern university life. I've never really understood that. I don't particularly because I <laughing> because, because uhh Greeks, this could be similar in other orthodox cultures but it's certainly true of Greeks. Greeks do not have the same problems that Catholics have, that the Protestants have. We really don't understand our culture apart from the church. Umm there isn't any issue of religious persecution that I know about. Umm now why is that so? I mean <laughing> the historical roots are well known that the Greek church was actually umm more of a kind of pastoral organization for centuries, 19, 18th century under

Turkish rule. Umm but it has a very kind of benign influence. So yeah, in my own life, I mean I'm not a particularly practicing or believing Christian but I, but I, s-, I have a great deal of sort of respect for it and I don't have a problem with it where my colleagues for example, "Well how can you possibly believe in talking snakes and uhh." You know women who have had children without having sex, et cetera. And it seems to me that we're not talking the same language. Umm it's more along the lines of a cultural {118} set of beliefs that affect culture. So I think that's true, in some ways it's true of, of my life.

I: Do you have memories of the church, any, anything in particular from when you were a child to the//

P: //Sure, I mean there's, you know I always, I always get, I've been thinking about this interview, I was thinking it's true of second generation Greeks that, we're different from first generation Greeks because we have a certain type of love hate relationship with, with what it is to be Greek. And the first one I, I, I'll call it "Nyso-Greekism." <chuckling> and then there's Philhellenism, that's the good part. But there's a lot of parts that we, I say "we" I should just say "myself," but it's the sort of things that get into, you know, comedies like recently "Big Fat Greek Wedding" and there are things like the evil eye and we can feel embarrassed about the fact that, you know, our uncle's named Pericles and your aunt's named Antigone. And the, there's certain degree of xenophobia and much, too much can be made out of that, it's not so much. But umm there's some customs that seem a little, you know, primitive. And that is a part of the Greek church that I remember of that, I mean that's the bad side. And then there's the Philhellene part. The bad side would be the huge eye in the triangle that's always in a church {133} it's called matiazi, the, the, the sort of {134} which is take away the evil eye. Umm the, there is a small part of superstition but that didn't enter but fortunately my parents weren't superstitious, their parents were. They had my grandmother is a sort of typical Greek of her own generation had all sorts of elaborate things that they would do {137} some of them were {137} but they were kinda superstitious. Umm//

I: //so the superstition.

P: Yeah but it isn't//

I: //it isn't//

P: the superstition is sort of puts it too easily, it isn't just superstition it's also the umm rather overwhelming sensory impact of the church. I mean that tradition goes back so far, they worked it out on many, multi-sensorial way. If you go to Greek church there is the smell of incense or frankincense, there is the choir, there are these dazzling icons, there is people you know, there's kinesthetic things you gotta sit down {143} <laughing> the whole thing, it's a total experience. Uhh it's, has been designed to kind of have a fairly strong {145}. That is, is part that's a little bit hard to take. Umm and then there's the elaborate things that happened on the important days like marriage and funerals.

Umm I, as I've gotten older it's gone more Philhellene and less Nyso. I now respect them a lot.

I: Can you, can you make that distinction for me? Wh-, how, what do you mean that Philhellene//

P: Well, the, the, the Philhellene is, you see I think that, at least my parents, first generation Greeks, they're, they're, they are Greek. They're, they're, they're kind of first person Greeks, you know, the "I" and the "we" are Greek. Second generation Greeks we're looking at it. If you've got parents like my parents who are so Greek that you're staring at it but you're not exactly it. So you, you, you're in between. I, I, I feel like I'm in a kind of limbo in a way culture, I'm not 100% American but I'm not Greek, I but I'm I'm, I'm kind of really connected with it but it's a little bit removed. And then you form a plus or minus, I mean you form the, what I call Philhellene and you find the Nyso-Greek. In the church, the Nyso-Greek things would definitely be about the, some of the symbols that seem to be, like the eye in the triangle always kind of got to me as a child. Umm the//

I: //Why do you think that got to you?//

P: //<laughing> {162} It, it's a powerful symbol, I mean it's, it's, it's, you know, it's on the dollar bill//

I: //Yeah.

P: I mean it's, I don't know where it comes from, it probably comes from Egypt or something but there, there are things that were, that really felt that this was meant to get into me and I don't know if I want it to. Umm now in terms of the bad, the, the things that I think at at least, I just think to myself not others, but I've heard from others and I've quite a few friends who are Greek, my own generation, it isn't so much the church, it's other kinds of things. It's umm, pride. There is, sometimes I felt embarrassed for my parents because of their extraordinary pride and belief that all things came from Greece. Actually the film, "My Big Fat Greek Wedding," it's, it's, there's a little joke about that, the father thinks that all words, Greek words, and every time the daughter comes up with something that's easily American Indian and somehow he works it out. Umm there's that side, particularly when you're young you wish they just wouldn't go there. But often in the beginning there is the love of it too and it's different from the first generations, the second generation ones have a little, I think, a broader span because we're not connected immediately to our roots, we can go all the way to any part of what is Greek culture so. I mean I, I love modern Greek poetry and, and, you know, you know, it's, it's odd that we didn't intend this but for example my brother ended up getting a degree in Classics <mumbling> {178} Classics, he just turned out that he took a course, an a, an intensive course in Latin, no it was in Greek, it was in Classical Greek and he thought for sure he would drop out but found out that he loved it. So there was some sort of thing that didn't plan it but now he has no interest in, you know, current modern Greek associations for example the AHEPA or, or umm there's one political action group here called {184}

California {185}. But he's extremely interested in Thucydides and he's extremely interested in dialects, Ionian dialects, Doric dialects, that's something that to me is typically second generation Greek, it kinda, because it's not rooted to us in the same way we stay in. The same thing happened to me, I didn't ever thought I'd be a Philosophy professor, I thought that I'd do other things. And that's what I do and I love doing it and I'm more and more into teaching {190} so that it's somehow planted in us. <laughing>

I: How do you think uhh, how do you think that happens, that was actually one of my questions, you know, how did you choose your occupation? Was it something that umm just kind of happened, the way your brother just kind of happened//

P: Well it <mumbling> part of it is just, you know, it's easy because, you, you know, big families like mine and I, and I think it's true of other cultures as well in cer-, certain ways, certain parallel between say a second generation Greek American seems to me the same a second generation, Jewish person whose, whose parents were born in Israel {197} <mumbling> somewhere. We went to Greek school sort so we did learn the Greek language uhh oddly. A priest came in when I was five, six, seven years old and taught us, the priest was a, would teach us to learn the Greek {201} at the same time as I was learning how to read English. So he would plan it that early, I mean that's something like riding a bicycle. I mean I was already could do it. So it did make it easier I suppose to, you know, pick up a text by whoever and then if I was just starting from scratch. And some of that may have happened with my brother but, but I think that that, there's more to it than that. Umm there is a part of the Modern Greek culture which really does, it's hard to take the layers off but it's layer upon layer upon layer but there's a kind of Hellenism which is still there. And I, and I mean by that a, in spiritual values there's a way in which, you know, I had mentioned, we were talking about {211} certain kind of {211} observat-, of observance instead of the same sort of belief that {213} Protestants {213}. Because what's understand is that what counts are certain ideals that in here they kind of come through, umm Hellenistic ideals, that is, <sighs> and I don't know too much about this but I think that, this is going to sound really {218} but I <mumbling> I think that there's a kind of Platonism and I mean by that, you know, Plato {219} forms, there's a form of justice, there's a form of {219}, there's a form of courage. In a strange, transmuted way they're still around and there's a belief that somehow it, in the midst of all of this chaos there's a crude justice out there somewhere in Greek stuff. And balance of some, that variety of, of {225} and courage and so those are those kinds of things and they're part, that's part of it, I don't want to make too much out of it because it, it, it, it becomes ridiculous if you really talk about it {227} but that's part of what I want as a {228} and it seems to me that modern poets, Greek poets, the, there's a lot of good ones, great ones. They get it in one way or another, umm//

I: //These ideals.

P: Yeah, now there's three that in particular: Kavafy and Seferis and Elytis that I know of. Kavafy that seems to be what he writes about all the time, me. He also writes a lot of homosexual poems but too much has been made out of that. Umm he's forever writing about Hellenism, what somehow managed to survive here and there, Seferis

writes about it all the time too, wonderful poems. I have some favorites umm, the Argonauts, {237} Mythistorema <mumbling>. You know, I, I know that uhh Modern Greek Studies did, you know, recent umm, uhh Muses, the Three Muses last year, umm did parts of {241} Axion Esti (Ἀξίον Ἑστί) which is, is a {242} <coughing> Elytis and {243} it's again taking the somehow being able to connect through this long {244} into these ideals in spite of its, there's a lot of bad things there as well that nobody had thought.

I: What, what do you umm, what, what customs and values do you think are important to preserve about?

P: I just think the way, the attitude toward religion is really very sound. Umm, it is a skepticism at the same, at the same time as a umm, kind of covert belief in the value in Christianity. It's hard to pin down umm, for example, my mother and father had a, had a, had a thought that priests should not be trusted in various ways, they thought the church should not be trusted. Umm.

I: What, why is that?

P: Well because they knew <laughing> a lot about what priests had done, what the church had done <laughing> and they were quite aware of there being certainly as prone to errors as anybody else. Umm they understood the Greek heritage also to be very much about money umm but they remained very loyal to it nonetheless. Now <laughing> why would they do that? They would never think of them, and they would never think of not being a member of the Greek Church. I'm a member of the Greek Church and I think I have to ask the question, "why?" Well, because again there's certain sort of proofs in it that in spite of it all it's, they're very much worth preserving. And there is this wonderful capacity to keep quiet about it, it seems in, in, in, in uhh, you know, Modern Greek culture. At the same time respect those aspects so there's, there's this kind of lots of wiggle room. Umm I don't know if that is, if that tells you//

I: //Yeah

P: //anything about it but it, it seems to be very healthy, very sane. Now I recently married and my wife's a Christian and she's pretty devout. We do not agree at all on Christianity, I mean, we're from different planets even though in some sense we're supposed to be really quite the same religion, we're fairly not and it's on so many different levels.

I: Is she Greek as well?

P: No, no, no, no. <laughing>

END OF SIDE A {280}

SIDE B: 000

I: So your wife is not Greek?

P: No, she's not.

I: Ok.

P: And she definitely, she says, "You know you really are kind of dyed in the wool, aren't you?" Which I've never thought of myself but I guess she's right. It, it's, it's fairly {002} I mean, one of the things I did wanna <mumbling> {002} I have a son from another marriage. His mother is also not Greek but he's in college at Amherst and he's finishing his degree in Classics now. I didn't push that in any way, in fact his mother is very much not Greek, said, "Don't you think you ought to study, study Greek?" And I, my response is, "Why?" Umm in terms of the modern, today's world, you know, it takes a lot of work and shouldn't he be knowing about chemistry, et cetera. So I didn't dis-, definitely was not in any way implanting this. Far less than me, who had, you know, Greek lessons when I was five, he didn't have any Greek lessons. And yet he's getting his degree in Classics. So there it is again. Umm//

I: //What, what umm aspects of tradition did you share with him as he was growing up?

P: All he knew was that my mother thought it was very important, I seemed to gravitate towards it, I think he was going by the actions. I don't think he was going by any kind of, I don't ever remember trying to {011} umm but somehow or other, he's gone that far with it. He's interested in literature and of course if you're interested in literature it's eas-, it's not so difficult to do I mean, if you're really interested in computer science, I don't know if <laughing> {015}.

I: Right. Umm maybe we could talk a little bit about, oh, first of all, what languages do you speak? Do you speak Greek?

P: I'm pretty good at Modern Greek, I, I've learned because of my, you know, I mean I can get along with Attic which is, you know, Athenian Greek from the 4th century, 5th century. Umm I can get along in French, I can barely get along <mumbling> {019} that's about it.

I: Umm and one thing about umm "Zoe" which is one of the stories that, that you've written, umm and these are stories that your mother//

P: //Mmhmm//

I: //told you, correct? Umm Zoe's a male order bride//

P: //Mmhmm//

I: //and what prompted you to write this story in particular, because I assume she told you many?

P: She did, umm, and she was known as a very good storyteller and even when she passed away at her wake, some of her friends, she had a lot of friends, they were part of something called Daughters of Penelope which was a women's organization which uhh Greek American women are in. They said, "You know you really did the wrong thing. You should have tape-recorded her stories because it's a big loss that they weren't tape-recorded." And I actually didn't think of it. Umm she was in her 70's that I should tape-record it. I actually got a tape recorder and started to do it but she, anyway it didn't work out. So then after she passed away which was about uhh a few years ago, and then I wanted to so I started writing and this, as was saying before, it, in a peculiar case I think it is very different but they were not, I think it's fair to say they longed for Greece, she and their, and her parents. Her parents <mumbling> {032} but that's reflected in the stories that she told umm. They were people who, who generally managed to succeed, stories of people who if not their generation the next generation would <mumbling> {035}. Greek Americans generally have done pretty well, they were willing to start from the bottom and you know just sort of work them up, way up little by little. But there is a kind of pall over it which is umm, pessimism about life and what it's going to <mumbling> {038}. So I thought that that story, we're talking about a story called "Zoe" which is a woman's name with a male order bride who really didn't get her due and the uhh play is of course that it's about life. Umm but it was one of her stories, yeah. And it of course was a woman named Zoe <laughing> so it made it kinda easy to characterize//

I: //So you, so you chose this story umm just because it was top of mind, it was one of the stories that//

P: //And it seemed typical.

I: Ok.

P: Umm and it, and as best I can understand it that was a practice that, I mean there were mail, mail order brides umm and they often times did umm come here and they had to rely on their luck as far as I could see. Sometimes everything was fine, sometimes the man would be 20 years older or sometimes he would be abusive or sometimes they would, then they would try and go back but <mumbling> {046}.

I: Before I forget I, I wanted to ask you, you, you mentioned that your, your mother-in-law {048} and//

P: //Her parents did now//

I: //her parents//

P: //she was here so long that she kinda just uhh picked, as far as I can see, she absorbed their attitude but it wasn't, she loved to talk about Greece, she loved to umm be

involved in Greek things. But since she was came here as a little girl I mean she couldn't long for it in a way that they did, they had an actual country.

I: Did she go back and visit Greece?

P: Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

I: Umm can you talk a little about the other stories that your mother told you, were there?//

P: //Mmm, there were so many. Umm the one that, that comes to mind is, it's because and I haven't prepared {058} actually do them justice but because I mentioned before the way that my parents met, she actually turned that into a, a story which she would tell about how, it became a story of how Greeks would reconnect with the past that they had lost and felt somewhat downhearted about. But as I was saying the way in which my, it turned out that my parents were saying their parents, their parents, were from the same part of Greece. So one of her stories, and this is again she based them in facts, umm was the point at which, her mother's name was Antigone <laughing>, found out that her son-in-law was the son of her childhood friend. Umm so this story would go along the lines of Antigone <chuckling>, went to San Diego and, you know, they would set out to try and open themselves up one family to the next. And so my father's, father's sister, {071}, umm welcomed Antigone and as they were talking Antigone was rubbing her arm like this, sort of on her elbow, like her fingers going around in a circle like that. And you know, and umm my mother's sister, Antigone, said, "You know that's so strange, you're going like that, I haven't seen that for years and years that, that movement, you're taking your fingers and you're making them go around in a circle on your elbow." My mother used to do that and umm so then uhh Antigone asked {078} "Well, who was your mother?" and she said Anna Rosakis {079} and she pretty much just kind of loses her teeth, you know, <laughing>. I mean she loses it because this was a friend of hers that, that they had parted when they were 16 and she said, "Oh, I'll never see you again." In fact she never did see her again but very close, very close friends and it turned out that here they connect up again. So this is, this is a story which uhh, umm, was typically one of her stories and of course, it was close to her because it of so much connect, connect to her immediate life. But they were like that, they were, they usually involved these values of <sighing> recognition of some sort. Umm maybe recognizing somebody or recognizing what was going to be in store for them, umm, you know, what they would have to face here. Umm, you know.

I: Umm and, and connections as well to say really umm, we must suspect that, that it's a small world for, for Greeks, at least.

P: Mmhmm.

I: And umm//

P: //something gets restored there, what did they, there was a lot of sense of that, I, I, I, I, I think that this is part of the immigrant story, how you get back what you lost, wherever it was. And then it comes back, you see, it does come back but it comes back in ways where you would never expect it. Umm and also these people were, and certainly they, they were very proud to be Americans at the same time. They longed for Greece, that's also part of the, the <mumbling>{095} both my parents did.

I: How did they, did they talk about citizenship at all?

P: Oh very big part of it. My mother actually helped to have, to get, helped people to get citizenship. She helped to, various forms, you have a lot of trouble being defined as, to try and learn enough because they were, often times they were, they were very quite uneducated and you know, they had {100} and sometimes depending upon who it was it was tough on them. And she liked to tell a story about one that she was helping and she had a, a series of them and he was again very late to come here and then they asked a question about different presidents and finally they got to George Washington and tell us about George Washington. And then he would say, you know, yeah it's a, it's a fish market, it's right there in Washington fish market <laughing> it's right, how, how they would try and fit them off, off what they knew and onto what they were supposed to know. <laughing>

I: Right.

P: Umm, yeah citizenship is a very big part of it umm for them. They were not escaping political, not the ones of that generation, now it may be different. But these were people who came in the 1920's, they did not have religious persecution, that's for sure, they didn't have political persecution, it was often times overcoming <mumbling> economic {111}.

I: Is that true of your paternal grandparents as well?

P: Definitely. Umm and then family connections. Somebody would be here and often times that person here would paint a picture quite different from what it was, but sometimes they would get it right. But that would kind of draw them. And you know part of it was the certain amount of I think it's part of Greeks, a certain amount of wanderlust. I mean and then they just sort of like to travel around. Umm but they didn't, they were not being uhh persecuted.

I: Umm, back to Zoe. I, I noticed that umm, you mentioned that, that a lot of her stories, umm were, were centered on, uhh, things coming around again and you know expectations of life in America. But Zoe didn't seem to win in her story.

P: No that was one of the deeply sad stories. Umm and it is quite true umm I mean again this story is about somebody who is a picture bride, comes over, finds out that the husband who she thought was gonna be around ten years old turns out to be thirty years older. He already has five children that he didn't tell her about. Umm, that whole

business, of the five children, of course is true, and they did not ever really admit her and they did not, umm, the father passed away, all that is unfortunately true. Umm but it is one of the sadder stories <mumbling> {128} umm.

I: I had a sense that umm Zoe she died in her sixties//

P: //Mmhmm//

I: //but there was a sense that I got reading her story that she, that, there was kind of a metaphorical death that had occurred at that time. Just being away from culture and the family that she knew in this family that she was a stranger.

P: Mmhmm.

I: Or treated as a stranger.

P: Mmhmm.

I: Is that something that you thought about in, in writing the story or umm I know that//

P: //Yeah, I//

I: //sorrow and death are//

P: //Yeah, as I'm trying to relate how my mother told it. Umm, she was having to definitely become far older than she was at an early age. And I guess that's kind of it, I mean she didn't get to do those things that people, you know, always want to do <mumbling> {139}. But she got {140}.

I: And why do you think your mother told you these stories?

P: She didn't like telling that one. <laughing> I thought that it was appropriate, umm, why did she like telling them? But this is part of a tradition, it really is, I mean I think that, that it's a fairly Greek thing to do. Umm, the storytelling, umm, umm mother actually {144} which is umm, which is a novel where he, he actually {147} outside of Athens and Kosta's a {148} storyteller. Umm he's trying to convey there's how he loves to have storytellers and people have been telling stories. Umm he was a way of, well known business <mumbling> {151}. Works very well, they share the same//

I: //worldview.

P: Same worldview and they say it, it, it's a kind of an object which goes deeply into them and they all impart it. That's a, yeah, that's a, that's a part trapeze of Modern Greek Studies that isn't so easily – Oh, but you're doing these oral history things. I mean that does capture {158}.

I: And, and, and who did you write these stories for? I know that you were chastised by your mother's friends for not reporting the stories, right?

P: <laughing> Yeah.

I: Other than, did you have an audience in mind?

P: No, not particularly. I just thought that it was a good idea to record 'em. Umm and I got a little bit of what she said on tape so I'll be able to try and work from that <mumbling> {164}.

I: Umm in, in Zoe's story you touched on, kind of an idealized umm Greek femininity a little bit.

P: Mmhmm.

I: Umm can you talk about that a bit//

P: //Yeah, that's part of what I, what I think is, I mean maybe it wasn't fair to make 'em so polarized between, you know, the Nyso and the disaffection for Greece versus the philhellenism. But umm there's a neoclassical part of Greek society which is, there will be pictures for example of, it so happened, I mean I sound as if I'm just <mumbling> {172} Greece but umm I have a house that I bought up in {174}. Now it turns out that the {175} person that owned it was Greeks, they were {175}, k? Now, I bought this house and it turned out that he had pictures on the wall. He had pictures on the wall of, umm Achilles slaying Hector, he had, of course {178} from Cyprus, lots and lots of ashtrays and various of kinds of things from Cyprus. Umm this is the part that, that I think the second generation of Greek-Americans are not too crazy about. It, it's almost, now if you go to a Greek restaurant, say in New York City, there's always gotta be a picture of art on the wall, there's somewhere {182} staring at you. And there's gonna be a window somewhere, you know, they have a {183}. It's, it's so formulaic umm that's, we're not too happy with that. Now in this story, I guess I tried to be, what, what the Greeks that Zoe, well the man that she ends up marrying, what he loves is this, I gotta be a little better than that, but umm the presents he would give her to show that he had an interest in the arts, they'd be that sort of thing. I mean and, you know, they had pictures of the nine Muses and there'd be some neoclassical kind of <mumbling> and they would, be a kind of thin version of, of {192}. By then I'd have the real thing which, sometimes we don't have enough time or whatever, you know but we don't get so much of that. So that woman who is, who is thought to be typically Greek is actually probably more typically French, more typically uhh maybe French <mumbling>.

I: Mmm. Interesting. Umm ok. Umm I, I, I thought too that umm, well no. We'll, we'll move on. Is there, is there anything else you'd like to add about the stories that umm you haven't mentioned?

P: Well just that, what the reason it sounds as if it was a rather unfortunate statement that the woman made at my mother's funeral, saying "It'll really getcha." <laughing> It wasn't, it was the stories which are very good but it was also the manner of telling them. These people had a skill, umm, it was umm a skill that had to do with a content a little but also had to do with – they were very good at tones, they were very good at tempos, umm this is probably what she was reacting to. Uhh not just the content that you could read in a, in a book but also the style of presentation umm.

I: Well that was actually, just a minute ago, umm what I was thinking about in, in your description in kind of idealized Greek femininity.

P: Mmhmm.

I: And umm you were, umm uncomfortable about presenting it as this umm extreme, I don't know, dichotomy of Greek versus non-Greek. But umm it always seems like a storytelling devise//

P: //Hmm//

I: //that, <mumbling> uhh, it, was that something you were conscious of, did your mother use those kind of extreme Greek ways of, of umm, describing people and things in her stories?

P: Well they would often times talk about a dream, you know dreams have this, that's, that's seems to be one of the places where Hellenism comes through. Umm after all Homer uses dreams.

I: Mmhmm.

P: Umm they would use dreams as a way of talking about a certain truth, that was one of the techniques. Umm, they would use faith chants. Umm it seemed to be very seldom involved, uhh you know, the kind of spiritual beliefs associated with Christianity is another place where {231}. In more often along the lines of, as the point that I tried to tell you about how just chants brought these people together or fate or possibly umm some {235}. Umm there's a certain love the Greeks have of gambling, my mother did. And I think that that is another expression of it. Umm it's again, there's a belief as much in, in faith and chance and a kind of suspension of what <mumbling> a story would kind of touch upon that. That seems to be true of Greek {241}. Umm where do you put that in Christianity, sometimes it belongs where it shouldn't. Umm Modern Greek of course is so much connected with the layers that they were taught to respect. I mean, you talk about the woman who was Zoe's mother, I mean, I think of, you know, anxieties and you even someone like Zorba, he has Bobolina who's a French woman. He does this, layers of what they were taught to respect, you know, in the way in which the church respects the French. And they had a certain respect for a lot of the English as well. That's all the heritage <mumbling> {250}.

I: Hmm. Ok. Umm, did your mother talk to you about Greek town at all? In San Francisco?

P: Oh yeah, yeah. Umm her problems were often times she had a gender issue and I think that it's fair to say that in her generation, it's probably also true of my generation, there's a pretty strong sense of male privilege. Umm her father at the extent that she couldn't go out and date, that she had to go with her brother. She very, very much wanted to be a lawyer, which <mumbling> {263} and umm she actually did get {264} at Stanford. Umm that was pretty much, uhh prevented from doing so because it wasn't the <mumbling>. Uhh and things conspired in that way. She was <mumbling> anyway but there's a lot of circumstances that occurred that made it pretty difficult, just lack of money and things like that. So she//

I: //So she never going?

P: No, but she actually kind of regretted that <mumbling> {271}. Umm she had a real respect for young women who managed to do that <mumbling> and that's a <mumbling> effect on me. Umm you know, I have a little bit more understanding of <mumbling>. Umm, so she is, yes, Greek town and the way it was there but, but it was very much connected with gender issues and what that meant to her. It was also connected up with the disadvantage that uhh took place in those first, in that first generation. You know, just the lack of, you know, difficult it was if you got on the bad side of circumstances without money, what <mumbling>. And they got to experience that a lot. Umm.

I: When you say that her, umm, recollections, stories about Greek town were tied up with gender, do you mean that Greek town offered kind of this socially reinforcing umm like bias or umm masculine uhh privilege that may not have existed if her family lived outside the realm of the Greek town?

P: Yeah, I think there was a little bit more, uhh it's, and it has to do with things umm. Yeah, there was probably more of expectation that you oughta be a teacher, if anything. And not have a career. Yeah, the idea of not having children too, it was also something that was just not done. I mean all of Greek women had children. Umm, there was a privilege there that actually she knew about and this actually went right into, you know, I think, you know, the end of the 20th century, even in, I hope I'm not stepping on anybody's toes here, but even in many of these clubs {302} <mumbling> in which the male <mumbling>. Umm.

I: Umm, you know what I didn't ask you, when did your parents move to San Francisco? Your mom went to meet your dad in San Diego.

P: Mmhmm.

I: And had to//

P: //no they moved, yeah they moved, they probably moved back here and these, {312} with almost all the brothers, like I said the seven, seven on both sides.
<mumbling> Umm as far as Greek town goes I mean most of those, as I understand, kind of <mumbling> newspaper which was a California newspaper and since that's what, thought that was most involved with, and how they managed to communicate what was going on from what part to the next. Umm.

I: But so it kinda maintained the social ties that//

P: //Mmhmm, mmhmm//

I: //<mumbling> Umm that actually brings me to another question. Do you, do you feel that your Greek heritage distinguishes you from like, from people with different backgrounds?

P: As I've, the older I've gotten in my life, I like it more and more so I've done more from the <mumbling> I think its, I think it's one of the best things that uhh I've got.
<mumbling> Umm yeah it really is, it's a kind of refuge when I'm feeling down, it's a kind of activity you find <mumbling> the place to, all these places to go and celebrate with people. Kathy and I, umm <mumbling>. She kinda likes it too but she <mumbling> she, it was more and more sort of bringing it in. And when we had Easter she said she wanted to do the {342} thing, when we got married she wanted to have people do circle dancing, so I guess it's kind of <mumbling>. Yeah it's very rich, I mean there's so many different parts to it that umm yeah, yeah, it, it definitely gives you something to work with, pretty much wherever you're at.

I: And so your wife embraces your heritage//

P: //Pretty much does, she pretty much does. I mean, she's not converting to Greek Orthodox <mumbling>

I: Mmhmm. Would it be important to, to you for her to convert, or?

P: No, no, I mean I say, I mean it's <laughing>//

I: //Yeah//

P: //the certain thing that is so unlike what I do. My reason, the reason she's not here is that she's on a, she's on a uhh hiking trip. She's hiking up Boulder Mountain which I was thinking that, you know, God I would never do that. I mean, I, I, that is so countercultural. I mean, I suppose the Greeks who were, you know, wouldn't go camping at night because they didn't have a house<mumbling> {360}. So it's, it's still I haven't gotten over that and I still don't quite get it. I mean I go with her because she likes it so much and we do camping. I've even gone, you know, fairly strenuous hikes but *all* the way through I'm, I'm thinking, "Why?" <laughing> And, and that, that, it just isn't part of it. But I'm trying it out, somewhat.

I: I have, I have umm a few more questions. Umm can you tell me a little bit about your umm father's occupation? He owned//

P: //Yeah//

I: //{371}.

P: <laughing> And he had, he had a {371} He used to claim that in the part of Greece that he came from that's where the performers came from. I think he was making up for the fact that he was doing something that was so {375}. I mean he, he wanted to be a acrobatic tap dancer, if you can imagine that, and umm//

END OF SIDE B {379}

TAPE 1, SIDE A {000}

I: <whispering> Ok.

P: Well you were asking about my father. Yeah, his, his is an interesting uhh life. Umm it's again a family, his oldest sister {002} is now 95 and she still I mean is very close again, the same business is *still* going on. Umm so he's living in Minneapolis. Umm and growing up in a grocery store with people that again are trying to make it middle class. And he wants to be a tap dancer and this is when Vaudeville was still around and goes away and is quite good. So he plays in the {006} Circuit, he played in the Palace Theatre in New York, he played, played in New York, he did very well. And it turned out that his parents died at a very early age and he was able to support these other six siblings from the time that he was 18. He got himself into some Broadway shows, always doing this bizarre thing, which is acrobatic tap dancing, which is vaguely associated with Russian dancing. He does a lot of Russian kinds of just fairly acrobatic. Umm <laughing> so.

I: //How did he learn how to do this?

P: Well the way he learned how to do it, this is in Minneapolis again. So he would tell it umm there's a woman down the street who was a Russian dancer who taught people to do Russian dancing, ballet, and Russian folk dancing, which was all these <mumbling> steps {13}. Umm even art dancing and he liked it and he went down there and she thought he was good, gave him lessons, and he apparently was very good at it and, and it was very important for them to make money, was not something to do. So there was apparently talent shows around and Vaudeville circuits and from the time he was 15, 16 could make a living and there more and more of a living. I actually have a, a picture book which is kind of remarkable of clippings that his sister, Stephenia, took and there were, were all these places, these famous theatres. So he was able to, to, I mean just in terms of dollars through the 1930's make 20 dollars a week, which is, was a lot of

money then doing this strange thing. In Vaudeville, and in Vaudeville they, they, they had, they wanted something that would catch your eye for five minutes and the people would do the same thing for five minutes. It could be umm you know some great opera singer or some great pianist playing exquisitely or it could be a woman, you know, singing a song would throw pigeons on her. I mean, if anything goes that would hold {023} <mumbling> telling jokes so he did something like this and he worked it out. Apparently he was good enough they would say, "My God, how could anybody do that!" <laughing> Come on, this was enough to keep going. Ok, so that's what he did until he was about 32 but you don't do that into your, your middle age, it's too much, it's too strenuous. And it finally got to him physically, he started throwing out disks and whatever and he got to the point where they were tellin' him, "You're not gonna be able to move unless you stop." And then he went the way, I think, of his forebears, which is he started a restaurant. It was San Diego, it was wartime, he did very well, he started buying hotels <mumbling> {029}. And Greeks have a knack for it. They, I, I don't say Greeks unfortunately don't know about corporations, maybe there are some corporations, some Greeks now in corporations, I'm sure now there are. But that's not the way they went then, they had to build it up from little businesses.

I: So he had a Greek restaurant in San Diego?

P: No <laughing>

I: <laughing>

P: No Greek restaurant, I mean they were very savvy, you know? So what he did, I mean this is war years, he actually built a place where they could get fast food, they didn't have fast food <mumbling> {033}. So that he had all of these military people coming in. They wanted instant food, they got in some food and they just ate lots. And again they worked it. His brothers worked there, I think that my mother, no I guess she, maybe she worked the cash register a little bit, they all would get in and do it. And then he became President of the Real Estate Association of San Diego, bought a big hotel, umm he had just started building. He had ups and downs, it didn't always work out, but yeah, that's where he found work.

I: And your mother helped him in his hotel business?

P: Devotedly, devotedly. Umm yeah, sometimes it didn't always work out that well, they would, they would buy some but it would crash in some way and then they would have to try and make the best of it. But they finally, you know <mumbling> {040}. Yeah, she was stuck by him in any of that. Umm I always admired how she was willing to umm *really* be his second in command and do whatever had to be done, whether it was, it was, that's the, the same side of the agreements in her, in her uhh mentality <mumbling> to choose {044}. And they would do that too, I mean if it turned out that it wasn't going well and they had to uhh you know, do whatever it is to make the hotel work, they would do it. And then when things went <mumbling>.

I: And did, did they come back to San Francisco for business reasons or?

P: Well by then they were doing quite well so, at least well enough. I mean that doesn't mean they weren't, you know, you know, really rich but they were clearly doing pretty well. So she always wanted to go back where her brothers and mother and father were and so they figured why not, they could sell what they had and started a, a he started up umm <mumbling> went back to a restaurant here and then he started up getting hotels and <mumbling> {051}. And so my brother and I kinda grew up in that. But that's an odd second umm generation thing too. Unlike, we did not, I must say "we," I think I can speak for my brother and also people from my generation, the Greeks that did not want, did not have that same spirit as the first generation. We wouldn't, you know, do whatever it took. No, we had to start, <laughing> you know, we were not going to umm, you know, clean up hotel rooms or rent rooms. No, we had to have some umm profession for Greeks and I, I think it's actually a fault because why not? I mean, what's wrong with that kinda life? Umm but that's sort of noticed. It's a *rare* second generation Greek that's willing to take on the same sort of work that the first generation did, so as to build their, their family, and brotherhood {060}.

I: How do you think your parents, do you think your parents kind of cultivated that the feeling in you that you shouldn't//

P: //partly//

I: //need to do that?

P: Partly, that's partly it, mean, they, they had that sense, "No, we did it, you don't have to do it." Umm but also I, I, I'm, the fact that it was, it was just being a little spoiled. I mean we didn't, felt we didn't have to. And that's something in my own life that I have, have learned to correct little by little, I don't know that I've ever fully corrected it. But as I've gotten older I've realized that you know, you got your, you want to get somewhere in life you've got to be willing to put, work and, you know, work and work hard, no matter what it is. And I learned that fairly late, uhh that things are not valuable unless you've worked for them. Umm no, it is true that, that umm my dad would tell me, "Don't worry, we'll take care of you." That was not good advice <laughing>. That stopped me from developing an ac-, academic career until I was pretty late <mumbling> {071}. Same thing happened again, I keep on mentioning my brother, my brother is John. He runs a bookstore now, uhh he owns a book store and has been running it here in San Francisco on Church Street, it's called Aardvark Bookstore. <laughing>

I: <laughing>

P: But it in fact, his story is similar in this regard is that because he had to go through various hard knocks before he could learn the lesson of what it is to be worked for <laughing>. Umm both of us, I mean, I'm, I'm, you know, proud to say that I'm a tenured professor but both of us had long lapses well into the 30's before we got

something like real. Umm and at this point, you know, we're ok, but and it was partly that. Yeah the Irish have an expression from shirt sleeve to shirt, shirt sleeve in two generations, that's to say that the immigrant comes here, works hard, develops, the next ones say, "No, I'm not gonna do it, I'm, I've gotta be here." <mumbling> {081} And they managed to spot him and then, and then their children don't know what to make of that and they're back to where the first generation was. <laughing> And it, that, that's somewhat of the pattern I think.

I: Hmm. Yeah. Umm do you wanna add anything else?

P: No, I thank you//

I: //thank you very much//

P: //thank you for taping this and uhh//

I: //this is great.

P: I enjoyed it, it's useful.

I: It will be, thank you.

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE A {085}

END OF INTERVIEW

Notes from the interview:

Tape 1

Side 1:

{004}: Spelling of mother's birthplace. It is Ethio, Greece?

{058}: What is the name of the mother's town in Laconia?

{184}: What is the name of the political action group, California...?

Side 2:

{071}: Name of the father's sister, was it Virginia?

{079}: Is the name of the mother of the above sister Anna Rosakis?

{144}: Spelling of Kosta Marousi, source of storytelling from the mother.

{174}: Where is the house that Peter bought with the Greek pictures on the walls?

{264}: What did Peter's mother get at Stanford?

{371} What did his father own?

Tape 2

{002} The name of the oldest sister of Peter's father.